

## **Advocates for Public Education Policy: Public Misled as Thousands Reject Standardized Testing**

**Newly released report finds flawed school performance ratings fail to account for needs of the state's at-risk students**

Full report:

[https://www.a4pep.org/files/ugd/1d9b84\\_4a35b5c4d5ea429196f0563533a0305f.pdf](https://www.a4pep.org/files/ugd/1d9b84_4a35b5c4d5ea429196f0563533a0305f.pdf)

Contact:

Dr. Paula Noonan, report author ([paulanoonan@gmail.com](mailto:paulanoonan@gmail.com); 303-246-7140)

Judy Solano, Chair, Advocates for Public Education Policy ([solanojud@gmail.com](mailto:solanojud@gmail.com); 720-371-9342)

DENVER, CO (Dec. 13, 2023): New research finds school districts with standardized test opt-out rates as high as 66% somehow meet participation requirements under a misleading state formula, while school districts with higher test participation rates were labeled as non-compliant.

“Cherry Creek School District, for example, had only 77% of students participating in testing after opt-outs, while 89% of students were tested in Denver Public Schools,” noted A4PEP Chair Judy Solano. “Yet when the state’s contrived calculation is applied, Cherry Creek somehow meets the 95% participation rate and Denver does not.”

Only 44% of the eligible 4,000-plus students in schools operating under Education reEnvisioned BOCES were tested in 2022. But the organization’s online and brick-and-mortar charter schools, whose test results are reported as a single school district, were awarded a 99.6% accountability participation rate under a misleading calculation that casts doubt on the validity of school accountability ratings.

“Connecting the Dots in Colorado K-12 Public Education,” by Dr. Paula Noonan, examines 111 Colorado school districts by population, financial support, student demographics, 2022 and 2023 performance ratings and test participation rates to reveal clear barriers to student achievement. The report highlights Colorado’s failure to provide districts serving high percentages of Free and Reduced Lunch, English language Learning, and minority students with the resources necessary for academic improvement.

“Thousands of parents reject standardized testing as a legitimate exercise for their children, while too many districts receive test participation ratings that mislead the public and compromise results,” Noonan noted. “Parents in wealthier districts are voting with their feet by opting their kids out of testing, but the state formula punishes the districts and schools where more kids are tested.

No district serving a population of more than 50% of students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch achieved the state’s highest rating of “Distinction,” with 7 of the state’s 11 highest-rated districts serving students at less than 25% FRL status. By contrast, none of the 52 districts that ranked at “Improvement,” the lowest performance level, serve students below the 25% FRL guidelines, and a large majority of those districts serve populations with more than half of all students on FRL.

“The heavy weight of poverty exists for too many districts,” Noonan said. “Large numbers of English language learning students further affect achievement levels, especially when non-native English speakers must take tests in English only. Funding for Improvement-rated districts is grossly inadequate to overcome the education obstacles districts face.”

"We must move away from high-stakes standardized testing and create an equitable accountability system free of labels which glorify some schools and stigmatize others," said Solano, former State Representative and former Vice Chair of the House Education Committee. "The schools aren't failing; we are failing our schools."

*Advocates for Public Education Policy (A4PEP) is a statewide coalition of individuals and grassroots organizations that work to educate the public and policymakers to ensure that public schools work for all students. Learn more at [A4PEP.org](https://www.a4pep.org).*